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## Old court giving way to upscale loft condos

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A high-end loft condominium project is scheduled to open late next year in, of all places, a nondescript former federal courthouse annex.

If all goes as planned, the \$8 million project will likely be the first significant condominium development in the heart of downtown.

The building, vacant for five years, is unusual because it was built with 20-foot ceilings to accommodate courtrooms. The soaring ceilings are perfect for building two-story loft units, developer Ron Schwabe said.

"The only good thing about the building is the ceilings," he said, joking.

The building, at 44 E. Broadway across from the former U.S. District Courthouse, will be converted into 30 loft condos, with a rooftop pool and sun deck. The exterior will get a makeover, losing its utilitarian 1970s-era facade. The lofts, 800 to 1,200 square feet, will start at about \$350,000.

Schwabe said he expects the project to sell out within a couple of weeks once the condos go up for sale in April.

"We already have people who are calling us wanting to reserve a unit, but we're not taking reservations yet," he said.

The development team expects to begin applying for building permits this month and begin construction in the spring.

Developer James LeBeau said the team is happy to play a small part in redeveloping downtown. "We're really trying to do something very nice for the city," he said.

The developers will offer a preview at the loft site Dec. 10 from 3 to 5 p.m., before the annual Downtown Parade of Lights.